



**Maryland Commission  
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

**Bill Title:** Missing and Murdered American Indian and Alaskan Native Women and Girls – Day of Awareness and Reporting Requirement

**Bill Number(s):** HB588

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**Date:** March 13, 2026

**Submitted by:** Jeremy Browning, Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

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**To:**

**House Government, Labor, and Elections**

The Hon. Melissa Wells, Chair  
The Hon. Kenneth Kerr, Vice Chair

**Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs respectfully submits this testimony in support of House Bill 588.

House Bill 588 recognizes the urgent need to raise awareness about violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls and to improve data collection and reporting related to these crimes. The bill would require the Governor to annually proclaim May 5 as Missing and Murdered American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Girls Awareness Day and require the Department of State Police to report to the General Assembly on whether law enforcement agencies are sufficiently collecting data on violence against American Indian and Alaska Native individuals in Maryland, along with recommendations to improve reporting, coordination, and public awareness.

Across the United States, Indigenous women and girls experience disproportionately high rates of violence. Research cited in the bill's preamble notes that more than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence and more than half have experienced sexual violence. These harms are compounded by persistent failures in reporting and prosecution and by gaps in data collection that obscure the true scope of the crisis.

At a legislative advocacy event held on March 11, 2026 by the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs and Native American LifeLines, legislators and community members heard directly from families impacted by this crisis. Their stories were a powerful reminder that these statistics

represent real people, real families, and real communities that continue to carry the weight of loss and unanswered questions.

Maryland is not immune from this issue. In recent years, the community has mourned the murders of Tiffany Jones and Yasmine Wilson, both members of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. Their deaths illustrate the devastating impact of violence against Indigenous women and the lasting trauma experienced by families and communities.

A key barrier to addressing this crisis is the persistent problem of racial misclassification. Research by the Urban Indian Health Institute found that in 71 percent of cases studied, law enforcement records misclassified or failed to record the victim's Native identity. When Native victims are not properly identified in official data systems, the violence affecting Indigenous communities becomes invisible in public records and policymaking.

HB588 helps address this problem in two important ways. First, it establishes a statewide awareness day to ensure that the experiences of Indigenous women and girls are acknowledged and remembered. Second, it directs the Maryland Department of State Police to evaluate current data collection practices and provide recommendations to improve tracking, coordination with federal law enforcement, and public awareness of violence affecting American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

These steps are modest but meaningful. Awareness, accurate data, and coordinated reporting are foundational to effective public safety policy and to ensuring that communities experiencing violence are not overlooked.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs also recognizes that many individuals affected by violence exist at the intersection of multiple identities, including Two-Spirit, queer and trans indigenous identities. Strengthening data collection and awareness helps ensure that all communities are visible and that responses to violence are informed, equitable, and effective.

For these reasons, the Commission respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 588.

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[Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs](#)

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